

DID YOU KNOW?

*More than
8,000 child
abuse/neglect
cases are
investigated
each year
in Nebraska*

UNDERSTANDING CHILD ABUSE/NEGLECT

"Child abuse" is any behavior directed toward a child (birth to age 18) by a parent, guardian or other adult that endangers the child's physical or emotional health.

- Physical Abuse: usually involves intentional, unexplained or repeated injuries like bruises, welts, burns, and cuts.
- Sexual Abuse/Exploitation: when an adult touches or uses a child for sexual stimulation of themselves or others.
- Emotional Abuse/Neglect: verbal assaults or the withholding of positive emotional support needed for a child's development.
- Physical Neglect: when children are deprived of necessary food, clothing, shelter, or care. Also, leaving a child under age six in a car unattended.

Most parents don't want to harm their children. Some may have been abused themselves. Things that can put a child at a higher risk of being abused include: domestic violence, drug or alcohol abuse, divorce, mental illness, economic difficulties and if the child is premature or disabled.

SHAKEN BABY SYNDROME (SBS)

Head injury is the leading cause of death and disability in abused children.

Shaken Baby Syndrome happens when a person shakes a baby. Often there are no signs of injury on the baby's body, but serious injury occurs inside the head.

WHY IT IS DANGEROUS TO SHAKE A BABY?

- A baby's brain isn't fully developed and can be more easily injured.
- A baby's head is large compared to the rest of the body.
- When someone shakes a baby, the brain bumps back and forth against the skull. It becomes bruised and bleeding occurs.
- A baby has weak neck muscles and can't support the head well. Shaking can injure not only the brain and eyes, it can kill the child.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic violence is when spouses or adults living in the same household cause physical or psychological harm to one another, including physical abuse, psychological or emotional abuse, sexual assault, isolation or economic abuse.

Domestic violence and child maltreatment often happen at the same time.

- When domestic violence and child abuse/neglect occur in a family, the abuser increases control and fear over the victim(s). At the same time, the victim and child(ren) experience decreased safety, independence and ability to care for themselves.
- If a child is living in a domestic violence situation and his/her safety is at risk, it's your responsibility to call the child abuse/neglect hotline.

○ If witnessing domestic violence results in a child exhibiting seriously disturbed behavior, the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services can intervene.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Children living with substance abusers have a higher risk of becoming a victim of child abuse/neglect.

○ Homes of substance abusers are frequently so dangerous that simply allowing a child to live there creates a greater risk of child abuse/neglect. Substance abuse also impairs the caregiver's ability to parent, placing the child at an even higher risk for abuse and neglect.

○ Methamphetamine abuse and production are serious problems in Nebraska. Exposure to the toxic chemicals used to make "meth" can cause long-term health problems in children. It can affect respiratory and immune systems, cause heart problems, brain damage, developmental difficulties and cancer.

○ Keep an eye out for signs of a meth lab in your neighborhood:

- strong chemical odor
- excessive trash that includes antifreeze containers, starter fluid cans, and red stained coffee filters
- suspicious people around property and frequent traffic

**IF YOU SUSPECT SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND
CHILDREN ARE INVOLVED – CALL YOUR LOCAL LAW
ENFORCEMENT AGENCY**

**IF YOU SUSPECT
CHILD ABUSE OR
NEGLECT,
STATE LAW REQUIRES YOU
TO REPORT IT.**

**CALL
1-800-652-1999**

**You Have the Power to
Protect a Child**

"It is permissible to disclose protected health information to a public authority or other appropriate government authority by law to receive reports of child abuse or neglect."

Federal HIPAA Privacy Law

ADA/EOE/AA

NEBRASKA HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES SYSTEM



www.hhs.state.ne.us



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